these guidelines provide an overview of some major issues involved in digitization, some of the best practices being followed in the field, and "a set of standards for digitization and access of digital materials" for those institutions wishing to participate in the statewide program.

Drawing upon information provided by leaders in the field of digitization, these guidelines will ask and attempt to answer some of the questions institutions involved in digitization will want to ask themselves or others. Knowing what questions to ask and when to ask them is a key to any successful effort. Answers to these questions can come from within the institution or organization, or from a variety of other sources. This guide is just one of the sources to consult when addressing key digitization issues. In addition, the guidelines do not represent a static document. As technology development creates new techniques, processes and concerns, the NC ECHO *Guidelines for Digitization* are revised to represent timely advice. If more extensive information is needed, there are links to national and international digitization literature at the end of each chapter. A Resources section at the end of the guidelines groups all documents and links in one place for easy access.

Are You Ready to Digitize Your Collections?

Cultural institutions face many challenges. They collect, preserve, and make their special materials available to the public, often with limited resources. Digitization appears to be yet another major project. Yet the long-term promise of digitization is compelling to even the most "challenged" institutions. This new project, however, involves more than simply sitting a scanner in the stacks and keeping it humming.

Traditional practices form the superstructure of any digital project: basic preservation techniques, good descriptive cataloging, and standard arrangement and description must be performed before the first digital image is created. Digitization is not a "replacement activity," but rather an addition to traditional cultural repository techniques and procedures, and in many cases serves as an enhancement of them. Digitization does not necessarily mean starting from scratch; in many cases, it involves building upon work performed years and years ago.

A review of digitization initiatives seems to suggest that successful projects

- have support among institution administrators and boards,
- begin with an inventory and assessment of holdings (whether informal or formal) and their extant information management tools (finding aids, indexes, registration records, etc.),
- find allies among potential collaborators,
- understand and follow standards and best practices being used by other institutions,
- draft a plan that outlines work flow, staffing, a schedule of activities, and a budget, and,
- start with a project that is "do-able," and celebrate early successes.

Before warming up the scanner or setting the digital camera tripod, institutions may wish to ask themselves some questions:

Why are we considering digitization?

Is it to answer the frequent queries of a group of users who send email everyday, asking, "What have you scanned that I can see from home?" Is it to meet the